

In Sickness and In Health

by Katsu

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Summary: I can't really describe this story except to say that it's the hardest, most difficult thing I have ever written--my testimony that the world is never fair using Gundam Wing as a vehicle.
(rewrite)

In Sickness and In Health

Written from four different viewpoints, watch for changes. Not all

>
characters get equal time.

>
P

>
Thanks for everyone that answered my macabre questions, especially my Evil

>
Twin MnM. Without her, I couldn't have written a great deal of this. I

>
couldn't have made myself write a great deal of this.

>
P

>
I researched for this as best I could, but if I get a few details wrong on a

>
medical standpoint, again, please forgive me. It's a hard thing for me to

>
find a balance between dramatic license and medical fact. In most cases, I

>
tried to choose medical fact over dramatics.

>
P

>
This was an extremely difficult story for me to write.

Hopefully, it's worth

>
it.

>
P

>
"Hand fits giving so do itbr

>
That's what the Gospel said to mebr

>
Life fits living so let your judgements go

>
That's how our future should be..."br

>
 (~Excerpt from "Sky Fits Heaven" by Madonna)

>
P

>
centerb~In Sickness and In Health~/b/center

>
P
>
[Trowa]
>
P
>
/It's over./
>
P
>
The words echoed in my mind like the ringing of bells or the
sweet strains
>
of Quatre's violin.
>
P
>
/It's over./
>
P
>
The war was over. I didn't have to kill any more. I didn't have
to hurt any
>
more.
>
P
>
/It's over!!!/
>
P
>
Perhaps, I didn't have to hurt myself any more. Perhaps, I would
have the
>
chance to heal, to cleanse some of the stains from my soul. With
Quatre. He
>
had promised, in his own way, to help me. I wasn't certain if I
could bring
>
myself to allow him to do so...but I would try. For him, I would
try. For
>
myself, I would try.
>
P
>
We all landed at the same airfield. In the distance, there were
cars coming
>
toward us, presumably filled with military personnel and
government
>
officials, or perhaps reporters. I didn't really care; I
intended to be
>
safely out of sight before they arrived. For at least a few
minutes,
>
however, we had the airfield to ourselves.
>
P
>
Duo was the first one out of his Gundam. I could hear him
yelling as I
>
jumped to the ground, letting out joyful whoops that neared
hysteria. A
>
small smile slipped out to tug at my lips. Heero and Wufei
dropped down to
>
the concrete runway shortly after. As I walked toward them, Duo
pounced on
>
Wufei, since he was the nearest to him. Wufei shouted, but he
made no effort
>
to escape Duo's enthusiastic embrace. As soon as Heero
approached the two of
>
them, Duo released the Chinese pilot and tackled his lover,
taking them both
>
to the ground. My smile widened.
>
P
>
"Trowa!" Wufei yelled, "It's over!"
>
P
>
"Yes," I said. "It's over." I glanced toward Sandrock. The hatch
was open,
>
but Quatre still hadn't come out. Duo untangled himself from
Heero and
>
grabbed my hands, spinning me around and around.

>
P
>
"Tro! Man! It's OVER! OVER!!!" He sang out. Then he was gone, once more
>
tackling Heero, who had just begun to stand up.
>
P
>
I looked at Sandrock again. The Maganacs would probably be arriving soon, to
>
whirl us off to a celebration. The war was over.
>
P
>
Quatre was still in his Gundam.
>
P
>
I walked away from the other three pilots, then broke into a jog as I saw
>
Quatre appear in the hatchway. He seemed to be having a problem; he was
>
clinging to one of the handles by the hatch, and he was carrying himself
>
strangely. I stopped when I was nearly underneath him. "Quatre?" I called.
>
P
>
"Hold on a second..." his voice sounded odd.
>
P
>
"Are you all right?" I asked, beginning to feel alarmed.

>
P
>
He relaxed his grip on the handle and began to lower himself toward the
>
ground. "I'm okay. Don't worry."
>
P
>
I nodded despite the fact that I knew he couldn't see me, not feeling
>
reassured. He climbed down the side of his Gundam, instead of jumping down
>
like he normally did. When he was about halfway down to the ground, he
>
paused for a moment, and his hand slipped, and he fell.
>
P
>
I had been half expecting something like that. I caught him with no
>
difficulty. "Quatre! Where are you hurt?" I asked. His face was pale, the
>
skin drawn tight against his delicate bones.
>
P
>
He shook his head. "I'm not hurt." he said. "I just...I...have a

>
headache...I must have gotten dizzy. I'm sorry..." he smiled at me and
>
closed his eyes for a moment. "You always save me." he murmured.

>
P
>
My worry drained away. We had been pushing ourselves ruthlessly for unending
>
months, and Quatre was no exception. Perhaps now that the war was over, he
>
had relaxed enough to allow himself to feel tired. "It's over." I said,
>
smiling.
>
P
>
"Yes." The word was a sigh of happiness. "Um...Trowa, you can put me down."

>
P
>
I nodded and set him on his feet. Immediately, he stumbled, and I grabbed
>
his arms. "Quatre?"
>
P
>
He was still smiling. "It's over." he said. His pale face contorted in a
>
grimace of pain and he coughed just once, then took in a deep breath. As if
>
that had been a signal, he began to cough again, and this time he didn't
>
stop.
>
P
>
I went cold. My hands were soon all that were keeping him upright, and I
>
quickly lowered us both to the ground. I held him against me and felt his
>
forehead; he didn't have a fever.
>
P
>
Quatre's eyes were wide and frightened. I was frightened, as well. I
>
couldn't begin to think what to do...I couldn't THINK at all. I pulled my
>
hand away from his forehead as he managed to pull in a deep breath, and then
>
coughed, very thickly. Something wet spattered on my hand...

>
P
>
There was blood on my hand. I yelled for help as loudly as I could.
>
P
>
centerb* * */b/center
>
P
>
[Duo]
>
P
>
Twenty steps from the front of the teeny tiny hospital room to the back.
>
Turn around, rinse and repeat. And again. And again.
>
P
>
I could feel Quatre's eyes on me as he watched from the hospital bed. We'd
>
taken turns staying with him once the doctors got done with the barrage of
>
tests they put him through. We were still waiting for the results. Trowa had
>
finally succumbed to sleep deprivation, and I'd bundled him into a cab and
>
sent him home. He hadn't wanted to go. Quatre coughing up blood had really
>
made him wig out. I'd have to say I didn't blame him. It had scared the piss
>
out of me, and I hadn't been the one holding him.
>
P
>
I stopped and glared at the wall, willing it to move. It didn't. I went back
>
to pacing.
>
P
>
"Duo..." Quatre said, his voice tired.
>
P
>
"Yeah?" Turn around, repeat. I'd managed to sit still in the

chair by

>
Quatre's bed for a grand total of seven minutes before I couldn't stand it

>
any longer. I hate not having anything to do. Not that pacing was a lot

>
better, but at least I was moving.

>
P

>
"You don't have to wait around...I'm fine..."

>
P

>
I knew I was driving Quatre nuts, but I couldn't help it.

Damnit, I was

>
worried! "You know, Quatre, I bet you'd say you were fine even if you were

>
trapped under a fallen building and trying to saw off your own leg." *That*

>
made him think for a minute.

>
P

>
"Probably." He finally agreed.

>
P

>
"I'm not going anywhere until a doctor-type comes by and tells me that

>
you're going to be fine." I said. "You really scared the shit out of all of

>
us."

>
P

>
"Sorry. It wasn't as if I was trying to."

>
P

>
I grinned at him. "Aw, admit it, Quatre. You were just trying to get out of

>
having to get your picture taken with five billion politicians."

>
P

>
He smiled back at me. It was nice to see him smile, but he was still too

>
pale.

>
P

>
Someone knocked on the door. I let them in--it was the doctor, and he was

>
carrying a thick manila file folder. His smile was a little too cheerful, a

>
little too professional. The room was suddenly very cold.

>
P

>
"Ah, Mr. Winner...I was hoping that you'd still be up." the doctor said. "I

>
need to talk to you about the results of your blood test." his eyes flicked

>
toward me.

>
P

>
Quatre saw. "Duo is one of the other pilots." he said, smiling at the

>
doctor. "I asked that one of them be allowed to stay with me all night if

>
they wanted. Anything you have to say to me, he can hear."

>
P

>
The doctor nodded and sat down at the foot of Quatre's bed. I immediately

>
sat down as well, on the stupid, hard wood chair that was by the bed. It was

>
impossible to get comfortable on. I hate having a bony butt.

>
P

>
"Mr. Winner, may I call you Quatre?" the doctor waited until Quatre nodded

>
before continuing, "I have the report on the blood tests we ran on you

>
earlier." he paused as if to collect his thoughts. "The results are

>
abnormal."

>
P

>
A shock ran down my spine. Quatre didn't get a chance to say anything,

>
because I jumped right in. "Abnormal as in how?" I demanded.

>
P

>
The doctor shot me an unreadable look. "The white blood cell count is much

>
too high. Nearly thirty times higher than it should be."

>
P

>
My stomach clenched, and I mentally hissed at it to stop that. I know squat

>
about medical tests. I had no reason to be worried. Really.

Doctors come and

>
talk to their patients personally all the time. Shit. "What does that mean,

>
exactly?" I asked.

>
P

>
"We can't be certain without more tests." the doctor said.

"We'll need to do

>
some more blood work tomorrow, and perhaps a biopsy."

>
P

>
I looked at Quatre's pale face, and was suddenly very, very afraid.

>
P

>
centerb* * */b/center

>
P

>
[Trowa]

>
P

>
I lay and bed and stared at the ceiling, just as I'd been doing since Duo

>
had shoved me into a taxi and sent me back to the hotel. I should sleep, I

>
knew, but I couldn't. I was too afraid. My stomach was churning, murmuring

>
acidly at me. I couldn't help but remember, over and over, how light Quatre

>
had felt in my arms. Too light, now that I began to think about it. He'd

>
never felt that frail before, when he'd embraced me. I couldn't help but

>
think about how he had been shaken by the coughs that he couldn't stop.

>
P

>
My hand clenched itself into a fist as I continued to stare silently at the

>
ceiling. When we'd gotten to the hospital and Quatre had been rushed off for

>
a battery of tests and medication, I'd calmly gone to the

bathroom and

>
washed my hand, scrubbing it until all the blood was gone.

>
P

>
It was still there, though, I could feel it.

>
P

>
I wasn't going to get any sleep.

>
P

>
centerb* * */b/center

>
P

>
[Duo]

>
P

>
My turn for Quatre watch again. I'd volunteered for the shift after Wufei's

>
this time. When I got in, Wufei was clearing up the remains of a game of

>
Xiangqi[1]. Quatre smiled brightly at me. We talked for a long time, about

>
stuff I don't even remember any more. The war, mostly. What we would do now

>
that it was over. Quatre said that he wanted to devote himself to his

>
father's companies. I asked him if he was planning to save some time for

>
Trowa. That got a nice blush out of him.

>
P

>
It was probably right about midnight when the doctor came back. He sat down

>
on Quatre's bed. He wasn't smiling.

>
P

>
Shit.

>
P

>
"Quatre, I just received the results of the tests we ran early today." he

>
said without preamble. "Do you want to hear them now?"

>
P

>
Quatre nodded. I reached out and touched his shoulder.

>
P

>
"There's no right or easy way to go about saying this, Quatre, and I think

>
you'd like to hear everything straight and unadorned, correct?"

>
P

>
Quatre nodded again, his face taking on an expression of detached calm.

>
P

>
"The biopsy confirmed our original fears. It's leukemia." the doctor licked

>
his lips nervously. "Lymphoblastic, acute, very late stage."

>
P

>
Quatre made a very small, distressed noise, and I looked down. My hand had a

>
white-knuckle grip on his shoulder. Through an act of sheer will power, I

>
loosened my grip. I'd heard of leukemia before. Cancer. Fuck.

>
P

>
Dimly, I heard Quatre ask, "How late?"

>
P

>
"Very. You should have been exhibiting symptoms for at least the past
>
month." the doctor said. "If you'd come in before now..."

>
P
>
"There wasn't time." Quatre said, as if he'd been expecting to hear that. I
>
looked at him sharply. He'd been feeling sick for the past month, and he
>
hadn't even told anyone. Suddenly, I was very, very angry, though I wasn't
>
sure at what or who. Quatre kept speaking, like it didn't matter. "How
>
long?"

>
P
>
"Wait a minute!" I yelled. "What the hell do you mean, how long? Are you
>
planning to die or something? Don't be stupid." I looked at the doctor.
>
"Tell him to stop being so stupid, doc. Doc?" The doctor only shook his
>
head.

>
P
>
"I'm sorry." he said. "We'll still try chemotherapy, to see if we can force
>
the disease into remission...if we can, then there is the possibility of a
>
bone marrow transplant, and we can hope that the cancer hasn't metastasized
>
[2]. But if it doesn't work..." he didn't finish the thought. He didn't have
>
to.

>
P
>
"How long?" Quatre asked again. He sounded calm. Way too calm. "Please just
>
tell me."

>
P
>
"Three weeks, perhaps." the doctor sighed. "I'm sorry, Quatre."

>
P
>
It was too late. Too fucking late. I wanted to scream.

>
P
>
"We'll begin chemo tomorrow, Quatre." the doctor said. He stood and patted
>
Quatre on the head like he was some kind of kid that didn't know what was
>
going on. "I'll see you in the morning." I decided that I hated the doctor.
>
He'd said that Quatre was going to die.

>
P
>
Going to die. I repeated the words in my mind. They sounded like a foreign
>
language.

>
P
>
By the time I had myself sorted out, the doctor was gone and Quatre was
>
staring blankly at the ceiling. I made myself grin at him. "Eh, well, you
>
know doctors, they're pessimists. You're going to get better."

>
P
>
Quatre blinked and looked at me. "Of course." he said. "Duo, what's Trowa
>
going to do?"
>
P
>
"I don't know." I said, "but Trowa's a big boy. He can take care of himself
>
on this one, I bet. You just concentrate on yourself."
>
P
>
Quatre turned away from me so that he was lying on his side. "I'm tired,
>
Duo. Would you mind letting me sleep?"
>
P
>
His flimsy hospital gown had slipped over one shoulder. There was a large,
>
ugly bruise there now, where I had grabbed him. I stood. "You're going to be
>
ok, Quatre."
>
P
>
"Good night, Duo."
>
P
>
"Yeah, yeah, good night. One of us'll be here in the morning." then I was
>
out of the room. The door clicked shut behind me as I headed for the
>
hospital doors. I could feel my grin still fixed on my face. It felt stiff
>
and unnatural.
>
P
>
Quatre was going to die.
>
P
>
I could hear myself panting, like I'd been running a marathon or something.
>
I stumbled diagonally across the darkened hallway until I hit one of its
>
sterile white walls, and I leaned against it, my breath coming faster and
>
faster. I was making little panicked whimpering sounds. It wasn't real. It
>
wasn't real. It wasn't real...
>
P
>
The next moment, I was on my knees on the cold tile floor, throwing up my
>
breakfast, lunch and dinner. When I was done, I wiped my mouth on the back
>
of my trembling hand.
>
P
>
"Oh Jesus, kid, are you ok?" Someone grabbed my arms and pulled me up, away
>
from the vomit splattered across the floor. He was wearing a white lab coat.
>
P
>
I lost it. "NO!" I screamed. "I'm not ok!" I hit him, but my hands were
>
shaking so badly that there wasn't any force behind the blow. He looked
>
stunned. "NOTHING is ok! It's never going to be ok! NEVER!" With each word,
>
I hit him again, more weakly each time. "It's not fucking ok!"

>
P
>
I couldn't cry.
>
P
>
That was ok, though, because boys don't cry, do they.
>
P
>
centerb* * */b/center
>
P
>
[Trowa]
>
P
>
Quatre smiled up at me from the hospital bed. The sheets were fresh, very
>
clean and white. Quatre looked lost in them, washed out, smothered. I
>
offered him a small smile in return as I reached out and gently took his
>
hand. There were still bruises on his arms from when I had caught him, and a
>
new one that Duo had caused. The slightest pressure on his skin would cause
>
an ugly purple welt, marring his perfection. I didn't want to risk it. I
>
didn't want to hurt him.
>
P
>
When had he gotten to be so thin? He'd never been large, I knew, but he'd
>
also never been quite so delicate, like a thinly spun glass sculpture. He
>
was fading. I could think of no other word for it. Every day, he was a
>
little more ethereal, as if the only reason he remained solid was through
>
sheer strength of will.
>
P
>
His smile never faded, though. I knew that he remained cheerful for us, and
>
for himself. Wufei, perhaps, would have shouted and cursed; Duo would have
>
become even more manic; Heero, I think, would have borne it stoically like I
>
would. Only Quatre could remain this cheerful when facing an end. Only
>
Quatre was that strong.
>
P
>
There was a bulge in the flimsy hospital gown, near his heart. They'd
>
implanted a catheter there, so they could more easily administer the
>
chemicals that they were treating him with. I couldn't make myself look at
>
it; it was too personal. Cancer had already invaded him; now the doctors
>
were following suit.
>
P
>
My life was slowly becoming one large, empty ache, all of my feelings and
>
strength, and my self being slowly sapped away by something that I could not
>
even begin to name. I could tell by the way the others looked at me that
>
they could feel the pull of the black hole that was building

itself inside

>
of me.

>
P

>
We no longer talked during my visits. Neither of us had anything left to

>
say. Most of the time, Quatre was asleep, anyway. He was on a great deal of

>
pain medication; the cancer had begun to spread to his lungs and his bones.

>
I would watch him sleep and hold his hand, not letting go until one of the

>
others came and chased me away, telling me that I should sleep.

>
P

>
But I would never let go.

>
P

>
centerb* * */b/center

>
P

>
[Duo]

>
P

>
I don't know what the other guys are made of. They took it so fucking

>
calmly. Wufei and Heero said nothing after I had told them the estimate of

>
three weeks. Trowa hadn't said anything to begin with. He'd just gotten up

>
when it was done, and gone and made dinner.

>
P

>
A dinner that none of us ate, now that I think about it.

>
P

>
I wanted to scream, and yell, and find something to kill. It was too

>
ridiculous. The war was over. We didn't have to die any more. And then there

>
was Quatre, dying in the hospital, and Trowa got up and went into the

>
kitchen to make us all ramen. It was too fucking ridiculous.

>
P

>
centerb* * */b/center

>
P

>
[Heero]

>
P

>
"How are you feeling?" I asked Quatre as soon as Wufei had left the room.

>
They'd been playing XiangQi again.

>
P

>
"I've felt better." Quatre said.

>
P

>
I nodded. I was the only one that would ask him how he was feeling, any

>
more. Perhaps the others were afraid of how he would answer. I suppose I

>
should have felt honored that he answered me honestly. Instead, I felt

>
nothing at all. Soldiers have no feelings.

>
P

>
If I told myself that enough, I would believe it. I was becoming my mantra.

>
P
>
I sat down on the wooden chair by his bed. Quatre turned his head so that he
>
could see me. There were a few blonde strands scattered over the white
>
pillowcase and the blanket; he was beginning to lose his hair.
"How are the
>
others doing?" he asked quietly.
>
P
>
"As well as can be expected." I said. "Duo is becoming obsessive." I was
>
more worried than I admitted. He rarely came back to the hotel any more,
>
instead sleeping at the hospital or disappearing for extended periods of
>
time without telling us what he was doing. "Trowa and Wufei are handling
>
themselves fairly well so far."
>
P
>
Quatre nodded. "I'm sorry, Heero."
>
P
>
"For what?"
>
P
>
He closed his eyes. "I'm not smiling for you."
>
P
>
"Save them for Trowa and Duo...and Wufei. They're the ones that need to see
>
it." I leaned back in the chair, crossing my arms over my chest. "We're both
>
soldiers, Quatre."
>
P
>
"The others are, too."
>
P
>
"Aa." I shrugged. "Maybe you and I understand death the best."

>
P
>
Quatre laughed softly. "I should hope you do. You're the one sleeping with
>
him."
>
P
>
"Idiot." I snorted.
>
P
>
He grinned for a minute before he sobered. "Do you think you could talk to
>
Duo for me? I'd do it myself, but..."
>
P
>
"Talk to him about what?"
>
P
>
Quatre shrugged. "Just talk. He's going to explode."
>
P
>
I sighed. "If I can pin that idiot down long enough, I'll try."

>
P
>
There was a long silence, and for a moment, I thought that Quatre had at
>
last fallen asleep, overwhelmed by the pain medication. "What's it like?"
>
P
>
"What?"
>
P

>
"Having someone that's completely in love with you?"
>
P
>
I raised my eyebrows. We were treading on ground that we had never touched
>
in our previous conversations. "You should know too." I finally said.
>
P
>
"Should I?" he sounded bemused.
>
P
>
"You have Trowa."
>
P
>
"True." he sighed. "I don't want to leave him."
>
P
>
"None of us want you to leave."
>
P
>
"I guess I don't have much of a choice, though, do I."
>
P
>
centerb* * */b/center
>
P
>
[Wufei]
>
P
>
I was surprised that Quatre hadn't tired of playing XiangQi yet. That was
>
all we did when it was my turn to watch him. We laughed and chattered while
>
we played, certainly, but it was meaningless. Quatre was always smiling. He
>
was facing the end with strength that I would have never given him credit
>
for; I was finding, however, that I hadn't really known him before. It was
>
only now that I was becoming acquainted with Quatre as a person.

>
P
>
That only made it harder. I willed myself to be strong and to not care, or
>
to face the impending loss with the same strength that Quatre was showing. I
>
couldn't care; I'd already lost too much. I didn't want to lose another.
>
P
>
Quatre was the strongest, I was coming to realize. He was more controlled
>
than any of us, with the sole exception of Yuy...and I was beginning to see
>
cracks in Yuy's mask; the day before, he had gone out walking in the rain,
>
and had not come back for several hours. He was disturbed and upset, even if
>
he did not want to admit it to himself.
>
P
>
I would be strong like him, I decided, and not burden anyone else with
>
whatever I might feel. I wouldn't feel grief, though, I had already told
>
myself that. We were soldiers, and death was a part of life.

>
P
>
Even if the death was an injustice. The war was over; why did we continue to

>
die? I kept asking myself that question, as irrational as it sounded. We
>
were born already dying. But this...this slow wasting away...it wasn't
>
death, was it? It was torture.
>
P
>
Quatre and I tied; we were both distracted, I suppose. Shortly afterwards,
>
he fell asleep. A tiny, restless movement of his head sent something
>
skittering out from underneath his pillow; it hit the floor with a hollow,
>
plastic click. I bent to retrieve it. It was an orange bottle of pills.
>
P
>
Curiously, I read the label. My hand clenched around it so tightly that I
>
could hear the plastic creaking.
>
P
>
Paxil. [3]
>
P
>
centerb* * */b/center
>
P
>
[Duo]
>
P
>
I wandered in to the hotel suite we were all sharing. Quatre's sisters had
>
been nice enough to get it for us; it was the closest place to the hospital
>
that we could find. I hadn't been back in a while, though. I'd been spending
>
my nights on a couch in one of the waiting rooms, breathing in the
>
disgusting antiseptic smell. When I wasn't sleeping or wandering aimlessly
>
while the others took their turns, I sat and talked to him for hours and
>
hours like I was trying to cram what should have been the next forty or
>
fifty years of friendship into a couple of weeks. I couldn't take it any
>
more. I had to get away, for just a little while, or I'd go insane, and then
>
I would be even more useless than I already was.
>
P
>
I found Wufei practicing Shao Lin forms in the room he'd claimed. He'd
>
pushed all the furniture over to one wall and was slowly parading around the
>
room, working on his punches. I leaned in the doorway and watched him for a
>
minute. It was something normal. I needed to forget for just a couple
>
minutes. Then I could go back to the hospital and start again.

>
P
>
Wufei continued along the wall, then turned ninety degrees at the corner.
>
Punch, punch, block, step. Block, punch, punch, step. It was comforting. I'd

>
watched him do it for over a year now.
>
P
>
Block, step, punch, block, pause...
>
P
>
That wasn't right. He never did that...
>
P
>
Wufei suddenly turned, and his fist went streaking toward the wall. There
>
was a loud crunch...and then he was just standing there, with his arm
>
through the paint covered sheet rock. He was covered with white dust.
>
P
>
Slowly, he turned back to look at me as if he'd just noticed my presence,
>
pulling his fist out of the wall. He walked toward me.
>
P
>
I took a step back, and then another. The look in his eyes...scary. Fucked
>
up. Freaky. A thousand words couldn't describe it. He brushed past me,
>
leaving smears of white dust across my shirt and pants.

>
P
>
"I must not know my own strength." was all he said.
>
P
>
centerb* * */b/center
>
P
>
[Wufei]
>
P
>
It was raining outside. I walked along, uncaring as it mixed with the gypsum
>
dust that still coated my hair and my hands, turning it into a thin grey
>
slime.
>
P
>
I had to get away before I broke more than a wall.
>
P
>
It took a long time, walking in the pouring rain, before I found a place
>
that was suitable. There were trees, and I could see playground equipment in
>
the distance; a slide, swings, a merry-go-round. There were no children,
>
though, no one at all. It was too cool and wet for anyone to be outside.
>
P
>
Finally, I allowed my control to slip, just a little, and I threw back my
>
head and screamed.
>
P
>
/No justice!/
>
P
>
/The war was over! Why did we have to keep dying?/
>
P
>
/Why?/
>
P
>
/Why is there no justice?/
>
P
>
I screamed and screamed my empty words out into the empty wind

until I could
>
be strong again.
>
P
>
centerb* * */b/center
>
P
>
[Trowa]
>
P
>
I sat down on Quatre's bed and cradled his hand in mine. He was
awake, and
>
though he was smiling, his mouth was pinched. His joints were
swollen very
>
badly today; not even the narcotic painkillers the hospital was
giving him
>
could defeat his pain. Two days ago, he hadn't been able to
stand; he
>
couldn't walk any longer, and was forced to depend on others to
take care of
>
even his most base needs. It had to grate on his nerves, even if
he wasn't
>
showing it. His hand was thin in mine, much to thin. The doctors
had told me
>
that he now weighed less than thirty kilograms[4]. If I held him
too
>
tightly, his bones might snap under the pressure.
>
P
>
"Trowa," he said quietly. His voice was the only thing that
hadn't been
>
partially destroyed by the cancer. It was still as sweet as it
had always
>
been...but now, I thought I could detect a faint thickness in
it, the sound
>
of lungs that were beginning to strain.
>
P
>
"Yes?" I looked at him. His hair was beginning to fall out in
large patches,
>
baby fine blonde strands littering the pillow and his shoulders.
It was
>
painful to see; I could clearly remember how only a short time
ago, he had
>
been the most beautiful person I had ever seen, not just for his
looks, but
>
for his vitality.
>
P
>
"I love you," Quatre said.
>
P
>
I looked back up, fighting for control, fighting to keep from
being angry or
>
crying. I wanted to tell him that I loved him as well. I
couldn't. I
>
just...couldn't. Quatre didn't seem to be expecting an answer.
He just
>
smiled.
>
P
>
He was beautiful.
>
P
>
Was I to lose who I was again? I'd only just found him, and I
was still
>
hiding.
>
P
>
I bent over him and kissed him, very gently, on the lips, never

letting go
>
of his hand.
>
P
>
centerb* * */b/center
>
P
>
[Duo]
>
P
>
"Morning, Quatre!" I sang out with my best brand of false cheer
as I bounded
>
into his room. He opened his eyes and smiled at me.
>

>
"Good morning, Duo," he said.
>
P
>
Someone had put a vase of flowers on the tiny table by his bed.
"Nice," I
>
commented.
>
P
>
Quatre laughed. "Heero brought them in."
>
P
>
That gave me a moment's pause. I plopped down in the chair by
Quatre's bed
>
and looked over at him...and froze. All of his hair was gone.
There weren't
>
even any fallen strands on his pillow. Someone had swept them
away. His skin
>
was tight against the bones of his face and head; his cheeks had
sunken
>
enough that he was starting to look like a skeleton.
>
P
>
No. I couldn't think of Quatre like that.
>
P
>
"The rest of it fell out this morning," he said when he noticed
me staring.
>
P
>
I had to joke. I had to. It was joke or cry. "Isn't your head
cold now?"
>
P
>
He laughed. "Yes. A little."
>
P
>
I pulled my black baseball hat off. It had made it through the
war intact,
>
somehow, but it had been soaked, squashed, smashed, crumpled,
and battered
>
enough that it was softer than jeans that have gotten washed
thirty or forty
>
times, and completely shapeless. I gently settled it on Quatre's
head.
>
"There ya go," I said.
>
P
>
He laughed, again. "Great, now everyone's going to think I'm a

>
troublemaker."
>
P
>
I put a hand over my heart dramatically. "Stricken to the core!
Quatre,
>
you're MEAN!"
>
P
>
He laughed. "I must be getting better, then, if I'm feeling good
enough to
>
be mean," he closed his eyes.

>
P
>
Suddenly, I knew. I don't know how, but it finally struck home.
He wasn't
>
ever going to get better. I was going to run out of laughter
soon. Oh God, I
>
had to get out of there.
>
P
>
Jesus...how could I start thinking about things like that?

>
P
>
Quatre was dying.
>
P
>
centerb* * */b/center
>
P
>
[Trowa]
>
P
>
Quatre was asleep. I sat down on his bed and gently took his
hand, as
>
always. Duo's ridiculous black hat was settled firmly on his
head, and I
>
smiled despite myself.
>
P
>
"Quatre," I whispered, "I wish..."
>
P
>
I closed my eyes. It was too painful to say out loud.
>
P
>
/I wish for just a little while, you could hold me, and tell me
that you're
>
going to be alright./
>
P
>
/Even if it is a lie./
>
P
>
/I wish.../
>
P
>
/I wish I could give you half of my life./
>
P
>
/I wish half of my worthless years would be yours, so you would
at least
>
have a chance to live.../
>
P
>
/...with me.../
>
P
>
It hurt too much. It was a stupid, cruel little game I played
with myself,
>
that wishing.
>
P
>
I sat there, for the rest of the night, and simply watched him
sleep.
>
P
>
centerb* * */b/center
>
P
>
[Duo]
>
P
>
It was pouring rain when I ran from the hospital. I didn't stop
to think. I
>
just went out into it, without even my coat, and ran and ran,
like I was
>
going to escape the image of skeletal Quatre in the hospital
bed.
>
P

>
I couldn't do it any more. I couldn't smile.
>
P
>
I couldn't smile!
>
P
>
/He's going to die./
>
P
>
/And there's nothing anyone can do./
>
P
>
/He's going to die, is dying right now, as I'm running through
the rain ,
>
thinking these worthless things to myself, trying to make myself
feel
>
better./
>
P
>
/I don't have a right to be sad. Do I even really know him?/

>
P
>
/Am I crying for his sake? Or for mine? Or for Trowa's? Or for
his sisters'?
>
Or the Maganacs'? Or for all the people that are never going to
know him?/
>
P
>
/Sister Helen might say that it's just God calling him home.
FUCK GOD! He's
>
a selfish, uncaring bastard to deprive us of him! To deprive HIM
of
>
everything in life that he should have had!/
>
P
>
/He'll never be angry again. He'll never be happy again. He'll
never see the
>
sunset or the stars or get to home base with Trowa. We'll never
get to take
>
him out on his first legal bar crawl when he's twenty-one. He'll
never eat
>
cake on my birthday. He'll never know what it's like to grow old
with
>
someone he loves./
>
P
>
/How can he die?/
>
P
>
/How can he die???

>
P
>
/HE NEVER HAD A CHANCE TO LIVE!!/
>
P
>
I ran until it was dark, and my braid was dragging my head down,
completely
>
soaked through with water. Then I ran more, trying to find an
escape,
>
something.
>
P
>
I don't know how I managed to find my way back to the hotel.
Pure homing
>
instinct, I guess. The guests shied out of my way as I half
staggered
>
through the lobby, toward the elevators. A bellhop tried to stop
me. I guess
>
he thought I was a vagrant or something. I shoved my card key in
his face,
>
stumbled into the elevator, and flipped him off as the doors
closed.

>
P
>
Fuck them ALL!
>
P
>
I stood in the elevator, shivering and dripping water all over the floor.
>
When it reached the penthouse suite level, I staggered drunkenly out, and
>
right into Heero's arms. He caught me more out of reflex than anything else,
>
and held me tightly when I tried to push him away.
>
P
>
I couldn't do this. Not any more.
>
P
>
All the strength left my body and I sagged in his arms.
>
P
>
Boys don't cry!
>
P
>
I was crying.
>
P
>
centerb* * */b/center
>
P
>
[Heero]
>
P
>
I didn't need to ask what was wrong. I held Duo tightly. He was shivering
>
like he was going to break apart, nearly hysterical sobs tearing themselves
>
from his throat. The baka was dripping water from every possible surface;
>
he'd obviously been out in the rain for a long time. He was so caught up in
>
his emotions that he didn't notice when I carried him into the bathroom and
>
dried him off, or when I put him in bed, then crawled in with him. He clung
>
to me like a lifeline; I held him so tightly that I was surprised he didn't
>
complain about not being able to breathe.
>
P
>
In a deep, secret part of myself, I felt relief so profound that it almost
>
brought tears to my eyes, that I wasn't losing Duo.
>
P
>
And for the first time in a long time, I felt ashamed.
>
P
>
centerb* * */b/center
>
P
>
[Trowa]
>
P
>
It was Duo's turn at the hospital; he hadn't gone for the last two days. I
>
wished that I could thank him, and tell him how hard I knew that it must be
>
for him, but I couldn't speak. I couldn't speak if I wanted to stay in
>
control.
>
P
>
Quatre's weight had fallen to twenty-four kilograms [5]. He had begun
>
vomiting profusely yesterday, and the doctors had finally

admitted defeat
>
and stopped treatment. The chemotherapy wasn't going to help him; nothing
>
could stop the cancer. All that was left was to make him comfortable until
>
the end, they said.
>
P
>
I let my eyes slide over to the phone. They would call, they said, when it
>
was time.
>
P
>
The thoughts weren't productive. I let my breath out slowly and returned my
>
attention to the task at hand. My sleeves were rolled up as far as they
>
could go; I was up to my elbows in soapy water. I had cooked yet another
>
meal that no one had eaten, and now I had to clean it up. I could have let
>
the hotel staff do it, but I had decided firmly against it. The suite had a
>
kitchen, and I would make good use of it. Menial, mind-numbing tasks,
>
however useless, were what I needed. I needed not to think. I needed to stay
>
in control.
>
P
>
There was a sharp pain, and I pulled my hand out of the water. Blood was
>
running freely from one of my fingers. Cautiously, I reached back into the
>
sink and retrieved the plate that I had been scrubbing. It was the next to
>
last; the rest of the hotel's dishes were already neatly stacked in the
>
drainer.
>
P
>
The plate's surface was marred where a chip had been knocked out of it.
>
Unusual.
>
P
>
Blood made thin and runny with water slid down across the white surface of
>
the plate. I watched it for a long moment before, very deliberately, I threw
>
the plate at the floor and watched it shatter, scattering pieces of white
>
porcelain across the tiles.
>
P
>
I reached for another plate.
>
P
>
centerb* * */b/center
>
P
>
[Wufei]
>
P
>
I paused in the middle of the form I was doing, idly licking sweat from my
>
upper lip. I needed this. I needed to concentrate on my body and think of
>
nothing else. Then I could be strong.

>
P
>
I cocked my head to one side, listening. Something had interrupted my
>
exercises, bringing me out of the half trance I had put myself in.
>
P
>
There it was again, the sound of something shattering. I walked quickly from
>
the spare room and toward the main suite. I sped my pace and headed for the
>
kitchen as the sound of more agonized smashing bled down the hall. Right
>
before I reached the kitchen, Heero intercepted me, his gun in his hand and
>
primed. I nodded to him and we ducked into the doorway.
>
P
>
The room was destroyed. Almost nothing was left on the counters, and broken
>
dishes and glasses littered the floor. In the midst of the wreckage stood
>
Trowa. He was breathing heavily, his eyes so wide that the whites were
>
visible all the way around. As we watched in shock, he grabbed a bowl from
>
the counter and flung it against the wall. The shards showered down on him,
>
one cutting his forehead open. Blood began to run thickly down his face.
>
P
>
"WHY?" he screamed, throwing another plate. "It's OVER! We don't have to die
>
any more!" he grabbed the kitchen table and overturned it, crushing a chair
>
under its bulk. "WHY?" he screamed again, grabbing another chair. He looked
>
in our direction wildly. I don't think he could even see us. With another
>
scream, he threw the chair.
>
P
>
That act pulled us out of our shock as Heero and I both ducked. I ran
>
forward, dodging another chair, and grabbed Trowa's arms. The taller boy
>
continued to scream, dragging me across the floor as he struggled. "Trowa!
>
Stop it!" I yelled. It did no good. He couldn't hear me. "Heero!"
>
P
>
He was instantly on the other side of Trowa, grabbing his other arm more
>
securely. Between the two of us, we held him in one place while he raged.
>
P
>
This wasn't Trowa. It couldn't be.
>
P
>
"Trowa!" I yelled again. Heero drew back his free hand, having long since
>
dropped his gun, and slapped Trowa as hard as he could.
>
P
>
Trowa's eyes widened for a moment, the sanity returning to them,

and he
>
simply collapsed to his knees, pulling us down until we were kneeling on the
>
pile of sharp dish shards. There was blood everywhere...on the floor, on his
>
hands, running down his face and mixing with the tears that were flowing
>
from his eyes. He covered his face with his hands and sobbed, still held
>
between Heero and I.
>
P
>
centerb* * */b/center
>
P
>
[Heero]
>
P
>
I shook my head and closed the first aide kit back up. Between the two of
>
us, Wufei and I had gotten Trowa into his bed, bandaged him, and forced
>
tranquilizers into him. He was asleep now.
>
P
>
Wufei was leaning on the wall outside of Trowa's room. He nodded to me as I
>
came out. "Sleeping?"
>
P
>
"Aa."
>
P
>
Wufei nodded again. "Someone needs to clean up the kitchen," he said
>
quietly.
>
P
>
"Aa."
>
P
>
"We can't ask the hotel staff to do it."
>
P
>
"Aa."
>
P
>
We found buckets in a janitor's closet on the next floor down. The broken
>
dishes were too sharp to put in bags.
>
P
>
Once again, we were kneeling in the middle of the wreckage. My knees stung;
>
when Trowa had pulled us down, I must have sliced them open. It was a small
>
pain, something I could ignore.
>
P
>
/Pick up the shard. Put it in the bucket. Pick up another, careful of the
>
sharp edge. A tiny pain; nicked myself anyway. /
>
P
>
/My hands are trembling. Why are they trembling?/
>
P
>
/Pick up the broken glass.../
>
P
>
/Why are my hands shaking?/
>
P
>
/Ignore it; pick up another shard.../
>
P
>
/They're still shaking! Why?/

>
P
>
/Drop the glass in the bucket. It shatters./
>
P
>
/My arms are trembling now. They won't stop. Why? What's happening?/
>
P
>
I stared at my hands with fascination. They were shaking, harder and harder.
>
The tremors were moving up my arms, into my shoulders. I could feel my legs
>
trembling as well.
>
P
>
"Heero?" Wufei paused in the middle of picking up a set of broken tumblers.
>
"Heero? Are you all right?"
>
P
>
"Aa." My voice sounded...afraid? What? I continued to look down at my hands.
>
There were tiny cuts all over my fingers, and blood was pooling in my palms.
>
Droplets of it began to spatter down on the floor.
>
P
>
/Why are my hands shaking?/
>
P
>
Wufei cursed, and suddenly, he was across the floor and his arms were around
>
my waist. I buried my head against his shoulder. I couldn't stop shaking.
>
Why?
>
P
>
"Wufei?" I asked. My voice sounded strange...
>
P
>
"It's okay, Heero..." he said. He was shaking too.
>
P
>
My eyes burned and stung. It felt strange. The fabric of Wufei's tank top
>
was getting damp under my cheek. "It's okay..." he said again. Water
>
droplets...tears? were falling hotly on my shoulder.
>
P
>
/Why?/
>
P
>
centerb* * */b/center
>
P
>
[Trowa]
>
P
>
I stared up at the ceiling, my mind still fuzzy with the tranquilizers. I
>
couldn't understand it; why was I still feeling? The emptiness should have
>
eaten everything away.
>
P
>
I didn't want to feel.
>
P
>
My eyes burned, and I closed them. Why was I still doing this to myself? Why
>
couldn't I accept the inevitable in this situation like I had every time
>
before?
>
P

>
/I wish.../
>
P
>
Quatre was dying. There were no more wishes.
>
P
>
A dim sound jangled across my nerves, shredding away what was left of the
>
drug-induced lassitude. The phone. There was a pause, and then the door of
>
my dark room opened, letting in a tiny shaft of light.
>
P
>
"Trowa," Heero said.
>
P
>
"Yes."
>
P
>
"That was Duo. He says it's time."
>
P
>
I closed my eyes tightly for a moment and fought for control. "I know."
>
P
>
centerb* * */b/center
>
P
>
[Duo]
>
P
>
The rest of the guys arrived about ten minutes after I called them. Heero
>
and Wufei were looking as calm as always. Trowa, though, was pale...and he
>
had a bandage stuck on his forehead. I didn't ask. I didn't care.
>
P
>
We arranged ourselves around Quatre's bed. The only sound in the room was
>
his breath bubbling and rattling. No one's supposed to sound like that when
>
they breathe. The doctors had told me that the cancer had almost completely
>
eaten away his lungs now, and he'd caught pneumonia somewhere along the line
>
because his white blood cells were defective. Quatre's sisters had decided
>
not to put him on a respirator. They'd already said their good-byes...it
>
wouldn't be right to keep him any longer.
>
P
>
I wasn't even sure if he could really see us, at first. His eyes were open
>
wide as he struggled to breathe. He wanted to live.
>
P
>
Trowa gently lifted Quatre's almost skeletal body into his arms, and I took
>
Quatre's hand. I could see every bone, feel how brittle they were under his
>
too hot, papery skin.
>
P
>
Outside, I could hear someone crying out as if they were in agony; Rasid. I
>
could hear the dull murmur of people praying; the Maganacs. As if some
>
miracle would suddenly occur, and Quatre would be well again.

>
P
>
/Oh please God, give us a miracle./
>
P
>
/I'll never doubt you again./
>
P
>
/Please God, give us a miracle.../
>
P
>
I was making soft choking sounds, trying to keep back the tears that wanted
>
to leak from my eyes. Damnit. Quatre's fingers curled ever so slightly
>
around mine. I could see it in his eyes. He wanted to live...but there was
>
so much pain.
>
P
>
Trowa murmured something very softly to Quatre.
>
P
>
Quatre whispered back. He said, "Yes...it's beautiful. But..."

>
P
>
/Oh God, Oh God, please give us a miracle...Please...I'm begging...I've
>
never begged before./
>
P
>
Trowa murmured again, and Quatre shut his eyes tightly, his face twisted
>
into a rictus of pain. His breath came harder, more unsteady with each
>
passing minute.
>
P
>
Then suddenly, he smiled, and didn't breathe again. His hand was now loose
>
in mine, boneless.
>
P
>
"No..." I said. "Damnit, Quatre, what are you playing at. You can't leave
>
us!" I tugged at his hand. I knew...I knew he couldn't hear

>
me...but...maybe...maybe...I tugged at his hand again. "You can't leave us.
>
Damnit man, this isn't funny. Stop it." I could hear my voice rising until I
>
was screaming hoarsely. "No! Damnit, stop playing! Stop it, Quatre! No! You
>
can't just leave like this! It's not supposed to happen this way! The
>
hero's...supposed..." I was breathing heavily now. My stomach hurt. My eyes
>
hurt. I hurt. "...supposed to...supposed to...ride of into the

>
fucking...sunset! DAMNIT!" I closed my eyes so tightly that brightly colored
>
sparks began to dance in my non-existent vision.
>
P
>
"DAMNIT!" I screamed again, still holding his hand. It was growing cold. I
>
let go of it suddenly. I didn't want to touch it. No. No. No. No....
>
P
>
I jerked away from the...shell...that used to be Quatre and

threw myself
>
willingly into the black, screaming darkness where I wouldn't
have to feel
>
any more.
>
P
>
centerb* * */b/center
>
P
>
[Wufei]
>
P
>
"DAMNIT!" Duo screamed. He slid from his perch on Quatre's bed,
falling down
>
into the space between the bed and the wall. His knees came up
to his chest
>
and he curled up into a fetal ball, rocking slowly back and
forth, clutching
>
his braid in his hands and crying like he would never stop. I
glanced at
>
Heero, who stood at the foot of Quatre's bed. He was staring at
nothing, his
>
eyes wide. Abruptly, he turned away and walked over to the
window, legs
>
stiff.
>
P
>
For a moment, I wanted to yell at him, berate him for leaving
Duo. For
>
leaving us.
>
P
>
But Duo wasn't the only one feeling pain.
>
P
>
I had to be strong. I had to show the same strength that Quatre
had. He'd
>
only made a sound in pain once. My eyes were burning, my throat
was closed
>
up so tightly that I knew I wouldn't have been able to speak
even if I had
>
wanted to.
>
P
>
My XiangQi set was still under his bed, I knew. I would have to
pick it up
>
when it was time to leave. We weren't going to ever play again.
My cheeks
>
were damp.
>
P
>
We'd only just said hello a few short weeks before. It was wrong
to be
>
parting ways already.
>
P
>
Slowly, I leaned forward and touched Quatre's limp hand. The
thin, delicate
>
skin was cold under my fingertips.
>
P
>
He'd faced the end well.
>
P
>
centerb* * */b/center
>
P
>
[Heero]
>
P
>
/Soldiers have no feelings./
>
P
>
I turned away and walked toward the window, unable to watch any

longer as

>
Duo began to scream at Quatre. It was weak of me. Very weak.

>
P

>
/My hands are shaking again./

>
P

>
/Why?/

>
P

>
/My stomach hurts./

>
P

>
/Why?/

>
P

>
I stopped in front of the room's only window. I could see the other in dim

>
reflection; Trowa, still holding Quatre's corpse, unmoving. Duo, falling off

>
the bed and curling up in the corner. Wufei, reaching forward to touch

>
Quatre's hand.

>
P

>
I could hear Duo wailing, softly, like a lost child. I wanted to go over to

>
him, and hold him tightly, reassure myself that he was still real, still

>
alive.

>
P

>
I couldn't.

>
P

>
/Soldiers have no feelings./

>
P

>
My hands were clutching the windowsill so hard that it creaked. My knuckles

>
were white. Deliberately, I turned my gaze out, to what was beyond the

>
window. There were clouds in the sky, but for the first time in

>
days, it wasn't going to rain in the afternoon. There were acres of green

>
grass outside the window, neatly trimmed, and trees that were just now in

>
full leaf. I could see people walking, or sitting outside in wheelchairs to

>
enjoy the watery sunlight.

>
P

>
Duo was still crying.

>
P

>
I glanced down at my hands, still clutching the windowsill, and watched as

>
hot droplets of water shattered on my knuckles.

>
P

>
/I feel sick./

>
P

>
centerb* * */b/center

>
P

>
[Trowa]

>
P

>
I could feel Quatre struggling in my arms, fighting to breathe, fighting to

>
live. We both knew that it was a useless reflex of the dying; he couldn't

>
win.
>
P
>
We couldn't win.
>
P
>
I wished that I could breathe for him, that if I held him tightly enough,
>
we'd melt into one and he could be whole and strong again. I would never let
>
go.
>
P
>
It hurt too much. I was too empty. Always empty. "Quatre," I murmured softly
>
into his ear, "can you see the end?"
>
P
>
His eyes widened, and he took in a choking breath. "Yes," he whispered. His
>
voice was weak. It hurt to hear. "It's beautiful. But..."

>
P
>
/I wish.../
>
P
>
I closed my eyes tightly against the pain, pressing my cheek against his.
>
"Let go, Quatre." I whispered to him. "Just let go."
>
P
>
I held him tightly as he shook and struggled, until I felt his face move,
>
and he smiled, then was still.
>
P
>
I held him until there was nothing left.
>
P
>

>
P
>
centerb* * */b/center
>
P
>

>

>

>
[1] Metastasis--when cancer spreads to other parts of the body, forming
>
"satellite" tumors.
>
P
>
[2] XiangQi is what is known as "Chinese Chess" a two-player game that's
>
very difficult and involves even more strategy, planning, and sheer
>
brainpower than regular chess, in my opinion.
>
P
>
[3] Paxil is a very powerful antidepressant
>
P
>
[4] Quatre's normal weight is about 90 lbs, for anyone that can't imagine
>
the metric system. 30 kilograms is about 66 lbs.
>
P
>
[5] 24 kilograms is about 53 lbs.

End
file.